GT 4/21/93

Springs gay rights backers out front

Role in march on Washington linked to Amendment 2

By **Louis Aguilar**
Gazette Telegraph

Colorado Springs gay rights supporters will be given a prominent place in a national gay rights march in Washington, D.C., on Sunday.

The Colorado delegation will be led by Springs residents, and the delegation itself will lead all state groups in the 1993 March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay and Bi Equal Rights and Liberation.

At the head of the march — which organizers claim will draw up to 1.5 million participants — will be AIDS victims and their support groups.

The prominence given to the Colorado delegation can be traced to the November passage of Amendment 2, a controversial measure that bans laws prohibiting discrimination against homosexuals based on their sexual orientation. The amendment has spurred boycotts against Colorado, which has been dubbed by some activists as "the hate state."

The amendment is sure to come under attack in the seminars and rallies surrounding the march, organizers say. "Amendment 2 is one of the rallying points for gays nationwide," said Lawrence Pacheco, a spokesman for Equality Colorado, an anti-Amendment 2 group in Denver. "In many ways, it has put this state on the map in terms of the struggle."

It clearly has galvanized gay rights supporters in Colorado.

Bob Jackson/Gazette Telegraph

Mike Fisher, right, helps display a banner that will be held Sunday by Colorado Springs residents who will lead the national gay rights parade in Washington, D.C.

■ Episcopalians reconsidering Denver for convention/**B6**

That's reflected in the large number of Coloradans planning to travel to Washington, D.C. In a similar march in the nation's capital in 1987, less than 1,000 people attended from this state and less than 10 of those were from the Pikes Peak region.

This time, buses have been rented, car pools have been arranged, and participants have made travel plans months in advance.

Said Frank Brown, a Denver-based organizer for the march: "Every day, we hear of new plans by groups going there. We can't really give an accurate figure of how many from the state are going." However, gay rights supporters have estimated up to 10,000 Coloradans and more than 150 Pikes Peak area residents could attend this year's march.

Many will march under banners displaying the names of gay rights groups that didn't even exist prior to the amendment's passage, and many of the marchers will be people who were keeping their sexual orientation in the closet just six months ago, said Colorado Springs organizers.

The 20-foot-long banner that will lead the state delegation will bear the name Ground Zero, the Springs group formed to fight the amendment. Many in the Colorado delegation will also be holding tiny Colorado state flags with the words "Under siege" printed on them.

One of the Springs residents going to the march is Marian Stone. "It is just so ironic that so many of us are going," she said. "One of the intents of the amendment, I feel, was to drive

See **PARADE/B3**

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AND MANY THANKS TO OUR STAFF WHO HAVE GONE ABOVE AND BEYOND, AND VOLUNTEERED THEIR TIME.

Sue Alexander
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Susan Baugh
Michelle Birch
Bob Caddell
Grace Cantu
Betty Carlson
Lucia Church
Mary Ann Clark
MaryAnn Colon
Kevin Conway
Sandy Culbertson
Leslie Cummins
Kim Danielson
Jeanne Dearth

Parade/'I'm helping make history'

From B1

homosexuals back in the closet or bury them even deeper in those closets. I guess this shows how that backfired.

"I feel like I'm helping make history by going to this march." she said.

That Amendment 2 could be a defining moment in the battle over gay rights is one of the few things critics and supporters of the measure agree upon.

"I agree that (the amendment) is historic," said Will Perkins, a spokesman for Colorado for Family Values, the Springs-based group that authored the measure. "We are the first state to stand up and say no to giving the homosexuals a protected-class status," he said. "We won't be the last, though. We've just set the pattern."

He may be right. At least six other states have groups working on Amendment 2-style initiatives.

Gene Nichol, dean of the Law School at the University of Colorado at Boulder, agrees that Amendment 2 could set a legal precedent. Enforcement of the amendment has been put on hold until a lawsuit challenging its constitutionality is settled in Denver District Court. In that suit, opponents claim the measure sanctions discrimination against gays.

Nichol said, "If the lawsuit makes it to the U.S. Supreme Court, which I think it will, then it could be a landmark case — one of the defining moments, if you will, in the issue of gay rights."

EDITORIALS

The assault rifle's stig

It's a human reflex to blame complex woes on a simple bogeyman. The stigmatized "assault rifle" serves that purpose for those who seek greater gun control as the supposed answer to violent crime.

Last Saturday's tragedy at a local bar — two people were killed and others were wounded by a man who entered the business wielding an assault rifle — likely will renew calls by the usual voices for a crackdown on these weapons.

Yet in terms of lethal capability, there is virtually no functional difference between the much-maligned assault rifle — in its legal, semiautomatic form — and the commonplace, semiautomatic hunting rifle over the fireplace. The hunting rifle can even pack more of a punch, depending upon its caliber.

Assault rifles, developed for use in the military, are distinguished from sporting weapons in the Unite
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